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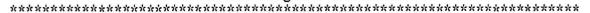EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
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ABSTRACT
         The case studies of three college students of
beginning Chinese, all native speakers of English, were undertaken to
examine how second language learners find a balance between
linguistic knowledge and communicative competence. Data were gathered
through classroom observations, oral and written coursework, and an
interview concerning Chinese language study, and analyzed on the
bases of discourse patterns, error patterns, and student attitudes.
Results are presented in the form of tables comparing data for each
student. It is concluded that two independent means of learning a
second language (linguistic knowledge and communicative competence)
exist in Chinese second language learning, and should be consciously
balanced in second language instruction. It was also found that the
three students represent three distinct learner types, for whom
different approaches are needed, including both creation of a
languag· use environment within and outside the classroom and
systematic development of linguistic knowledge and other skills such
as reading and writing. A 44-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

BALANCE OF LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION
COMPETENCE IN TEACHING CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
(Paper presented at the 1995 ACTFL-CLTA Conference,
Anaheim, CA, Nov. 18-21)

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Two aspects of second language acquisition have long been
noticed in second language theory. Many researchers have tried to
identify these two aspects and explain the functions of these two
aspects in second language acquisition. According to Krashen's
theory in second language(1985) that we have two independent means
of gaining ability in second language, acquisition and learning.
Acquisition is a subconscious process, which produces what Chomsky
(1965) calls "tacit competence," or a "feel" for language. Learning
is conscious knowledge, or "knowing about" language. If this theory
is true to teaching Chinese as a second language, I believe that in
teaching college Chinese we need a good balance of both learning
the language knowledge and acquiring communication competence. I
will consider the hypothesis that both aspects, linguistic
competence (learning) and communication competence (acquisition),
are equally important but that they play different, complementary
roles. One competence is needed more in certain situations and
tasks, the other is more useful in others. An effective college L2
instruction should provide the students with both aspects of
language competence.

In this case study I select three elementary Chinese students
at college level for observation for one semester. During this
semester, I observed their general performance in class, collect

their oral and written samples, and interview them about their studies of Chinese. The analysis focuses on how <u>acquisition</u> and <u>learning</u> function in their performance in the course and how to get the balance. The findings are used not only to examine the learning and acquisition theory, more important, to find pedagogical implications to teaching Chinese as a second language.

Three Beginning Students

In this study, three subjects are selected through a college Chinese language classroom. The criteria of selecting the subjects is to find one student who has no exposure to Chinese language prior to the course, two are from Chinese American families, who have the natural language setting to acquire spoken Chinese, but had no previous formal classroom instruction and their performance in the course is different. I believe that L2 learners need formal instruction to learn language knowledge, and also need settings to use the language, they need to balance <u>learning</u> and <u>acquisition</u>.

<u>Subjects.</u> All the three students selected are enrolled in Elementary Chinese at a university located in a large eastern city, and English is their first languag. By the time the data were collected, they all completed one semester of Elementary Chinese and are in the second semester.

Student A is a white, male college senior, whose major is biology. He had no previous exposure to Chinese language before entering the course. His rank in the class (which has 21 students) is a little above the middle. Student B is a Chinese American, female junior, computer science major, who had no formal Chinese

language education, but speaks Chinese at home with her parents. Her class rank is in the lower end of the class. Student C is also a Chinese American, male sophomore, majoring in marketing. He did not have the experience of taking any sort of Chinese class, nor could he write Chinese characters when he first entered the Elementary Chinese. But he often speaks Chinese with his parents at home.

Data collection and data analysis. Three kinds of data are collected: (1) classroom observation; (2) course work, such as quizzes, tests, student essays and oral presentation; and (3) interview. The interviews are tape-rcorded and transcribed. Discourse analysis is used to study the observation and student oral and written presentation data to find out the difference in performance. The course work is used to assess their overall performance. Errors they made in these tasks are analyzed as evidence of their performance. Interview data will be used to explore the reason for their different performance in the process of learning Chinese.

Student Performance in the Course

For easy comparison and quick description, I will use the following tables to present the data.

Course performance. The description is based on classroom observation, their writing and oral presentation.

Table One. Course Performance:

	Student A White male	Student B Chinese Am. Female	Student C Chinese Am. Male
Class-room Observ-ation	Often volunteers to do simple tasks, but can not understand long segments of talking in Chinese.	Quiet in class, never volunteers to do any tasks, but tries to do whatever the instructor asks her to do. Often makes grammar mistakes.	Always active in class and participates all kinds of activities. He often helps others in class and very rarely makes grammar error.
Writ-ing	His writing is interesting, full of new ideas. He has no big grammar mistakes, but often uses wrong words. His thinking is beyond his language level.	Her writing often copies text language, although grammartically correct at sentence level, but lack of discourse connectors.	His writing is natural, with good text struc-ture. He tries to use new sentence patterns .
Oral	The contents of his dialogues are rich. If talks long, he needs some preparation. His intonation is not good.	Her dialogues are simple in contents and language. She cannot pronounce some words correctly.	His dialogues are interesting, with correct grammar and good pronunciation. The vocabulary is often beyond the textbook.

Course work. For comparison, three quizzes and the final examination of the semester are selected. The students in this course take quiz on weekly basis. The three quizzes selected were done at the beginning, middle and end of the semester respectively. Errors are picked out for analysis (see Table 2).

Table Two. Frequency of errors made by the three students.

Type of errors	Student A (frequency)			Student B (frequency)			Student C (frequency)		
	New	Acc.	total	New	Acc.	Total	New	Acc.	Total
Grammar	6	4	10	13	8	21	3	3	6
Spelling	8	15	23	9	12	21	2	8	10
Others	2	1	3	1	3	3	1	1	2
Total	16	20	36	23	23	45	6	13	18

Notes: Acc.=Accumulated errors which refer to errors in grammar or words learned in previous lessons.
New refers to errors in new grammar or words learned in the lesson being tested.

From the error analysis, we can see that Student A made less grammar mistakes in the tests than Student B (only 47.6% of total grammar errors made by Student B). Student B is really weak in grammar, especially the new grammar points. This is consistent with the classroom observation. She often made grammar mistakes in class. Student C made less errors in the tests (71.5% less than Student B and 40% less than Student A in grammar). Generally speaking, the findings in their course work is consistent with the classroom observation. But why they perform differently? From their own description of their study we can find the answers.

Interview data

In the second half of the semester, the author interviewed the three students separately. Most of the questions are quite the same. **Table Three. Interview**

	Student A	Student B	Student C
The reason Why study Chinese	1.Learning the language may help him study Chinese history. 2.He wants a language more interesting and challenging, 3. To impress people.	My mom made me study Chinese. I want to learn reading and writing.	As a Chinese, I should be able to speak, read and write Chinese.
How they study Chinese	1.Copying the new words in a notebook; 2. writing down and saying the words till he can memorize them; 3. translating the text from English to Chinese; 4.listening to the tapes, and talking to a tutor.	1.Reading and saying the new words till she can memorize them; 2. self-testing the new words; 3.sometimes going over the text.	1.Copying the new words 10-30 times till he can write them decently; 2. making a list of the new words and memorizing them; 3, trying to use the new vocabulary and grammar by translating the text.
Whether studying Chinese is the same as other subjects	Different from studying other science subjects. He can study by himself in other subjects, but for Chinese, he needs the class.	No idea.	Same as other subjects, memorizing the new rules and formulas and then learn how to apply them.

From the interview data, we can see the reasons why the three students perform differently in the course.

The reason Why study Chinese. Both Students B and C are from Chinese American families, they think studying Chinese is important to them. However, Student B's answer to this question is "My mom made me study Chinese". She keeps the Chinese cultural tradition to

be obedient to parents. But her reason for studying Chinese is passive, not because she realizes her own need of learning Chinese, but studies for her mom. Student C's answer to this question is different. "I am a Chinese. As a Chinese, I should be able to speak, read and write Chinese." His attitude is "I want to learn". As a result, he is more active and motivated than Student B in learning Chinese. In this respect, St dent A who has no Chinese family background at all is also motivated and active, but his motivation is different. Student A's decision of taking Chinese is made totally on his own. He did call his father when he was considering whether to take Chinese, and his father said, "No. You will never do it. It would be too hard. You will fail immediately." Hearing that, he said, "No, I'll take Chinese because I know that if I take something like Spanish, Italian, it would be boring, because I didn't want to take them. I think Chinese would be interesting and challenging." So, he takes Chinese against his father's advice. This is a typical example of independent individual in American culture.

How they study Chinese. The way of learning the new words are generally the same for the three. But after memorizing the new words, Student A has to spend more time on many different things. He translates the text, which is actually a task to use the new words and grammar, and at the same time review the old. When he has problem to understand a sentence, he studies the grammar. This process of studying how to use the words is really important although many other ways can be used beside translation. It helps

to internalize use of the language. That explains why his grammar is even better than Student B who is a Chinese American. Student B misses a step here. She only memorizes the new words, but not tries to use them. She does not read aloud even though her pronunciation is not good. Similar to Student A, Student C also does the translation. He realizes the focus of this step is how to use the words and grammatical rules.

Whether studying Chinese is the same as studying other subjects. Language learning is a social activity. In that sense, Student A is right. He needs to interact and communicate with others while studying Chinese. But if we break studying Chinese into learning tasks, learners can adopt the same learning skills and strategies they use in other subjects, as Student C sees it. Previous research shows that adult L2 acquisition has more in common with other kinds of adult learning (Bley-Vroman, 1988; Snow, 1983; Fathman & Precup, 1983). If we look at their GPA (Table 4), we can see that students with good grades in other courses usually get good grades in Chinese too. These students know how to study other subjects, they know how to study Chinese too.

Table Four. GPA of the three students.

	Student A	Student B	Student C
GPA	3.6	2.7	3.92

Summary

From the three kinds of data, classroom observation, course

work and interview, we can see that Student A is a self motivated and independent student. He works hard on Chinese. His course grade is good. He learned grammar quite well. His problem is speaking and listening. He needs more practice. Student B has the advantage to use Chinese at home, but her performance in the course is not good. She often makes grammar mistakes. Considering her GPA, and her general performance in this course, she needs to improve her basic learning skills. Student C is motivated in learning Chinese and works hard on it. Although he can speak the language, he still spends a lot of time on it. More important, he pays attention to learn the use of the language while studying the new vocabulary and grammar. His success in the course is an example of a balanced way of learning language.

Now we turn to the question, whether the performance of the students are decided by "Learning the language knowledge", or "Acquisition of communication competence", or both. Student A is strong in grammar and other learned language knowledge, but weak in communication. He acquired a little communication competence through the course, but his fluency is far from the other two students. Student B is strong in communication (acquired mainly through home setting), but weak in language knowledge. Student C develops language knowledge and communication competence evenly. Student A needs the environment to acquire communication competence, that is acquisition. Student B needs to learn knowledge of Chinese language if she wants to be a well educated Chinese language user, what she needs is learning. From Student C, we can

see that a good second language learner needs balance between language knowledge and communication competence, his Chinese develops in a balanced way between _learning_ and _acquisition_. He fully makes use of the natural setting to use the language, but also works hard to learn the language knowledge.

Implications to L2 instruction

1. The two independent means of gaining ability exist in learning Chinese as a second language. A good learner needs to balance learning language knowledge and acquiring communication competence.

2. The three students represent three types of learners. For the three types of students, we need to emphasize different things in different aspects in our teaching, but the purpose of our teaching should be balancing the two aspects, language knowledge and communication competence. For Student-A type, we need to create the environment of using the language inside and outside classroom. For Student-B type, we should not only engage students in speaking activities in class, we need also to provide them the opportunity to learn language knowledge systematically and to develop other abilities such as reading and writing. In order to achieve the balance of the two aspects in L2 instruction, we should think of the whole teaching process to find ways of balancing the two aspects.

3. In our teaching, we should bear in mind the principle of getting balance of the two aspects in our teaching. Now the dispute between proficiency-oriented teaching and the traditional way of

training is still going cn. I think both methods are needed in order to balance leanring language knowledge and acquiring communication competence. Even when we still use the traditional textbook, we can apply this principle one way or another. We can design different activities that provide students with contexts to use the new sentence patterns, or ask them to create contexts of their own. We should pay more attention to language use in our instruction. Ideally, we may use different kinds of teaching materials for different type of students.

The present study investigates the three beginning students of college Chinese and concludes that in our L2 instruction, we need to balance language knowledge and communication competence. Students who can get a good balance of the two aspects are good language learners. This study is mainly a case study, the important findings need to be examined with more L2 learners.

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